

Repentance and Constantly Returning to Allah (Tawbah and Inaabah)

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REPENTANCE AND CONSTANTLY RETURNING TO ALLAH (TAWBAH AND INAABAH)

We are all familiar with the term Tawbah (when one repents to Allah), but there is another very similar term called Inaabah (إِنَابَة), a term mentioned in the Qur'an many times. And since it is Ramadhaan, we want to move from Tawbah to Inaabah.

Ibn al-Qayyim said it is to hasten pleasing Allah, while continuously and repeatedly returning to Allah (at all times). Meaning, it is Tawbah but continuous Tawbah. Part of Inaabah is to retreat to Allah with your heart, with love, reverence and sincerity in accordance to the Qur'an and the Sunnah. Just as one retreats in the last ten days of Ramadhaan for I'tikaaf, leaving everything behind, Inaabah is constant returning in I'tikaaf to Allah. A heart needs to retreat to Allah with honour because if it does not do so with Allah, it retreats with humility to other than Allah. Turning fully to Allah in trials and at ease is Inaabah.

A person who is Muneeb (مُنِيب) is one who repents when he commits a sin but goes further beyond that to change and become in constant contact with Allah, with a relationship with Allah.

Allah said it about Ibraheem 'alayhis-salaam:

إِنَّ إِبْرَاهِيمَ لَحَلِيمٌ أَوَّاهٌ مُنِيبٌ ﴿٧٥﴾ هود: ٧٥

Verily, Ibraheem was, without doubt, forbearing, used to invoke Allah with humility, and was repentant (to Allah all the time, again and again). (Surat Hud: 75)

Ibraheem was without a doubt forbearing, which is Haleem (حليم). Invoking Allah with humility, that is Awwaah (أواه). And Muneeb (منيب) is repenting constantly, time and time, again and again, constant repenter to Allah.

A verse considered by some of the 'Ulamaa to be the most hopeful verse in the Qur'an:

قُلْ يَا عِبَادِيَ الَّذِينَ أَسْرَفُوا عَلَىٰ أَنفُسِهِمْ لَا تَقْنَطُوا مِن رَّحْمَةِ اللَّهِ ۚ إِنَّ
اللَّهَ يَغْفِرُ الذُّنُوبَ جَمِيعًا ۚ إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْغَفُورُ الرَّحِيمُ ﴿٥٣﴾ وَأَنِيبُوا إِلَىٰ
رَبِّكُمْ وَأَسْلِمُوا... ﴿٥٤﴾ الزمر: ٥٤

Say: O 'Ibaadi (My slaves) who have transgressed against themselves (by committing evil deeds and sins)! Despair not of the Mercy of Allah, verily Allah forgives all sins. Truly, He is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful. And turn in repentance and in obedience with true Faith (Islamic Monotheism) to your Lord and submit to Him (in Islam). (Surat az-Zumar: 53-54)

After repentance, Allah mentions:

وَأَنبِئُوا

That is what we are targeting.

Inaabah is three levels. The first level is the root of Inaabah (the principle), which is leaving Shirk to Tawheed, leaving Kufr to Islam. Not having this will make one a Kaafir, because it is leaving Kufr to Islam. That is the first level and it is taken out of the verse:

وَالَّذِينَ اجْتَنَبُوا الطَّاغُوتَ أَن يَعْبُدُوهَا وَأَنَابُوا إِلَى اللَّهِ لَهُمُ الْبُشْرَى ۚ
فَبَشِّرْ عِبَادِ ﴿الزمر: ١٧﴾

Those who avoid At-Taaghoot (false deities) by not worshipping them and turn to Allah in repentance, for them are glad tidings; so announce the good news to My slaves. (Surat az-Zumar: 17)

The second level of Inaabah is the Inaabah of al-Muttaqeen (the pious), leaving sins and committed in doing deeds. Whoever does not have this one, he is Muslim and he falls under Islam but we fear Hell over him unless Allah forgives Him (because he has sins). That is taken out of the verse in Surat az-Zumar:

قُلْ يَا عِبَادِيَ الَّذِينَ أَسْرَفُوا عَلَىٰ أَنفُسِهِمْ لَا تَقْنَطُوا مِن رَّحْمَةِ اللَّهِ ۚ إِنَّ
اللَّهَ يَغْفِرُ الذُّنُوبَ جَمِيعًا ۚ إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْغَفُورُ الرَّحِيمُ ﴿الزمر: ٥٣﴾

Say: O 'Ibaadi (My slaves) who have transgressed against themselves (by committing evil deeds and sins)! Despair not of the Mercy of Allah, verily Allah forgives all sins. Truly, He is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful. (Surat az-Zumar: 53)

And the following verse after it:

وَأَنِيبُوا إِلَىٰ رَبِّكُمْ وَأَسْلِمُوا لَهُ مِن قَبْلِ أَن يَأْتِيَكُمُ الْعَذَابُ ثُمَّ لَا تُنصَرُونَ

﴿الزمر: ٥٤﴾

And turn in repentance and in obedience with true Faith (Islamic Monotheism) to your Lord and submit to Him, (in Islam), before the torment comes upon you, then you will not be helped. (Surat az-Zumar: 54)

The third and final level of Inaabah is the level we are trying to target this Ramadhaan, the Inaabah of the Muhsineen. The peak, complete turning to Allah in your heart and in your body. Constantly returning to Allah again and again, in all times and in all situations, and being in complete submission to Allah. This is the best form of Inaabah. This is the Inaabah of Ibraheem 'alayhis-salaam, this was the level of Ibraheem 'alayhis-salaam:

إِنَّ إِبْرَاهِيمَ لَحَلِيمٌ أَوَّاهٌ مُّنِيبٌ ﴿٧٥ هود﴾

Verily, Ibraheem was, without doubt, forbearing, used to invoke Allah with humility, and was repentant (to Allah all the time, again and again). (Surat Hud: 75)

And it is also mentioned that Shu'ayb said:

...وَمَا تَوْفِيقِي إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ ۖ عَلَيْهِ تَوَكَّلْتُ وَإِلَيْهِ أُنِيبُ ﴿٨٨ هود﴾

And my success cannot come except from Allah, in Him I trust and unto Him I repent. (Surat Hud: 88)

Ibn Taymiyyah Rahimahullah said the people of this level are the people most tested by the Shaytaan because they are the best, and the Shaytaan wants to get the best off track.

Look at the master of humans, the Imaam of all Imaams, the master of the repenters, the master of the worshippers, sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam. He said:

وَاللَّهِ إِنِّي لَأَسْتَغْفِرُ اللَّهَ وَأَتُوبُ إِلَيْهِ كُلَّ يَوْمٍ سَبْعِينَ مَرَّةً

By Allah, I seek the forgiveness of Allah and repent to Him seventy times every day.

Seventy times in Sahih Bukhari and then a hundred times in Sunan an-Nasaa'ee. If the Prophet sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam whose past, present and future sins are forgiven and he repents and asks Allah for forgiveness between seventy to a hundred times a day, how

many times should we ask when we are not guaranteed forgiveness for one of the hundreds or thousands of sins that we have committed?

Sins harden the hearts, so repent to soften your heart. It is a disease.

ثُمَّ قَسَتْ قُلُوبُكُمْ مِّنْ بَعْدِ ذَلِكَ فَهِيَ كَالْحِجَارَةِ أَوْ أَشَدُّ قَسْوَةً...

البقرة : ٧٤ ﴿

Then, after that, your hearts were hardened and became as stones or even worse in hardness. (Surat al-Baqarah: 74)

Sins darken the heart so repent, so you can cleanse your heart. There is no better time than these blessed days.

Allah said:

كَلَّا ۚ بَلْ ۚ رَانَ عَلَىٰ قُلُوبِهِم مَّا كَانُوا يَكْسِبُونَ ﴿المطففين: ١٤﴾

Nay! But on their hearts is the Raan (covering of sins and evil deeds) which they used to earn. (Surat al-Mutaffifeen: 14)

Dot after dot placed on the heart, it comes to a time when you need to wash it out.

'Awn Ibn Abdillah said the ones who are constantly repenting to Allah are the ones you should always be with, because they have the softest hearts.

Repentance is a great bargain with Allah. Look at the deal you strike. You make a mistake, you transgress, you repent and you correct your future, all your sins are forgiven and a big baggage more. This Ramadhaan, no one forgot to stock up on food and groceries, and if they did then they go prepare for it before Maghrib. But what about stocking up on Istighfaar, Tawbah, good deeds and repentance?

يا رب إن عظمت ذنوبي كثرة فلقد علمت بأن عفوك أعظم ، إن كان لا

يرجوك إلا محسنٌ فبمن يلوذ ويستجير الآثم

O Lord, if the greatness of my sin increases, then I know Your forgiveness is even greater. If only the righteous call You, then who would the sinners like me go to?

أَدْعُوكَ رَبِّي كَمَا أَمَرْتَ تَضَرَّعًا فَإِذَا رَدَدْتَ يَدِي فَمَنْ ذَا يَرْحَمُ

I call on You my Lord as you ordered and commanded, with humility, with reverence, and if You turn away my hands then who else is going to accept from me? If You turn away my hands, then who else is going to have mercy on me? If You turn away my hands, then who else is going to forgive me?

مَالِي إِلَيْكَ وَسِيلَةٌ إِلَّا الرَّجَاءُ وَجَمِيلُ عَفْوِكَ ثُمَّ أَنِي مُسْلِمٌ

All I have is hope in You Yaa Allah, that You will forgive me and that I am a Muslim.

One of the most popular questions I get on this matter of repentance and Inaabah is, I repent and then I do a sin, then I repent and I do a sin, and I give up and I despair. Allah is talking to you, did you read the Qur'an? Allah is talking to you, calling you:

...يَا عِبَادِيَ الَّذِينَ أَسْرَفُوا عَلَىٰ أَنْفُسِهِمْ... ﴿الزمر: ٥٣﴾

O 'Ibaadi (My slaves) who have transgressed against themselves (by committing evil deeds and sins)! (Surat az-Zumar: 53)

Allah did not say O you believers and He did not say O mankind, as He said many times in the Qur'an. He did not say Muttaqoon, He did not say the pious and He did not say the Muhsineen. He did not say the forerunners, the Saabiqun Bil-Khayraat (سَابِقٌ بِالْخَيْرَاتِ). He called on the sinners not to despair.

'Aasim Ibn Rajaa' said Umar Ibn Abdul-Azeez gave a speech one time and he said O people, if you fall in a sin then repent, and if you do it again then repent again, and if you do it again then repent again because the sins enclose on the necks and they are a destruction. And the peak of destruction, the destruction of all destructions is remaining on sins and persisting on them without repenting.

An authentic Hadith al-Qudsi in Sunan at-Tirmidhi. O son of Adam, as long as you call on Me, I shall forgive you of what you have done and think nothing of it. O son of Adam, even if your sins were to reach the clouds in the sky and then you were to come and ask for My forgiveness, I would forgive you and think nothing of it. O son of Adam, if you were to come to Me with sins nearly as great as the earth and you were to meet Me after death not making any Shirk, I would bring you forgiveness as great as the earth and think nothing of it. You are dealing with the Ghafoor, you are dealing with Ar-Raheem, you are dealing with the 'Afuw. That is what you get out of the qualities of Allah which you know about.

Ibraheem Ibn Shaybaan said there was a twenty year old youth that he knew. The Shaytaan instigated to him that you are young, why would you repent right now and leave the pleasures of this life? You have a long life ahead of you. So he went back to his sins and his old ways. In the midst of the sins, he had a flashback to his old days with Allah. A believer is still a believer even during sinning, he still has Laa Ilaaha Illallah in his heart. So he yearned and longed and began to cry and weep for those days. He said will Allah ever accept from me? Then he heard a voice (it was possibly him talking to himself) saying:

عَبَدْتَنَا فَشَكَرْنَاكَ ، وَعَصَيْتَنَا فَأَمَّهَلْنَاكَ ، وَلَئِنْ رَجَعْتَ إِلَيْنَا قَبْلُنَاكَ

You worshipped Us and We thanked you, you sinned and We gave you respite, you come back and We will accept from you.

If you repented and got fooled by the Shaytaan, then return, do not be ashamed and do not despair. When you continuously repent, it is like a wrestling match with the Shaytaan. Every time you repent, you have pinned the Shaytaan down and won, you are the champ. Once you despair and stop repenting, the Shaytaan became the champ and you do not want that. Do not be a surrenderist and accept continuing sinning and being on the wrong path. Resist and struggle the sins. Maybe one of your shouts to Allah in repentance will be so sincere that He will write you among those swayed from being in Jahannam, and take you into Jannah.

How can you despair in Allah with all these Ayaat and Ahaadith, when He is asking you. Why is He asking you to repent when Allah does not need me nor you? He is Independent and Sovereign. That is Ar-Raheem, that is Al-Ghafoor, that is Al-'Afuw. Wallahil-'Adheem, you are dealing with One more merciful than your mother.